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THE HOLY GRAIL

by

MAC E. LEACH

**THE HOLY GRAIL
BEING A COMPARISON OF THE CEREMONY
DESCRIBED IN THE ARTHURIAN ROMANCES
WITH THE RITES OF INITIATION
AMONG PRIMITIVE PEOPLES**

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THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

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ROMANCES WITH THE RITES OF INITIATION AMONG PRIMITIVE
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INTRODUCTION

Recent critics have maintained that the Grail ceremony¹ is the account of an initiation ceremony, objectively presented. Their theories have, however, been based on supposition, on what certain persons connected with occult views and practices tell them after reading Grail texts, and on the similarity to certain Vegetation ceremonies, into which they supposed there was secret initiation. Real initiation ceremonies have not been examined in this connection.

This paper is the result of a study of the primitive initiation ceremonies of tribes of Australia, of Africa, and of the American Indians from the standpoints of their relation to each other and to Grail ceremony. It may be objected that the hiatus is too great between primitive initiation ceremony and the Grail rites for any good to come from such a study. One has, however, only to examine the history of a secret society to be convinced that the ceremony does not change from generation to generation.² Secret societies are conservative; every step in the ritual is conducted as it was conducted in the

1. Jesse L. Weston, *The Legend of Sir Perceval* ii, 253.

R. Heinzel, *Ueber die Alt - Franz Gral Romanen*.

2. C.W. Heckethorne, *Secret Societies of all Ages and Countries* i, 147 et seq. 191.

in the beginning. Certain magical figures and schemes are preserved by Masonry though their meaning is no longer understood by that fraternity.¹ One can go further, as an attempt has been made to show in one division of this paper.² There are certain fundamental parts to every ceremony of initiation, which obtain for all ages and countries. The custom of certain modern secret societies of the simulated death, burial and resurrection of the initiate is the most wide spread of all initiation rites. It is found among the Natives of Torres Straits, among the Zuñi Indians of Southern California, among the tribes of Australia and Africa; it formed a part of Druidical ceremonies and of the initiation rites of Egypt, of Persia, and of Greece. If the story of the Grail is the account of an initiation ceremony, it must possess those characteristics which are common to ceremonies of initiation.

It will, then, be the object of this paper to note the common elements in the various versions of the Grail legend, to note the fundamental characteristics of primitive initiation ceremonies, and to record points of similarity between Grail ceremony and initiation rites. When there has been a question of doubt, the point has been noted, often, I fear, at the risk of becoming trivial. However, some of these points may be more significant to deeper students of Grail tradition.

1. C.W.Heckethorne, op.cit. 249

2. Below p.10

THE FUNDAMENTAL POINTS OF SIMILARITY BETWEEN THE
GRAIL VERSIONS

Using the abstracts of Grail Texts in Nutt's The Legend of the Holy Grail as a basis for quotation and Miss Weston's The Legend Of Sir Perceval as supplementary and explanatory,¹ the following points of similarity have been noted:

1. The lamentation of the mother.
2. Virginity and purity of the knight.
3. The supper.
4. The procession.
5. Object - sacred, foodgiving, healing.
6. The question and its result.

1. The following texts were used: v. Nutt, op.cit.ii,8.

Conte du Graal,

Chrestien (C)

Gautier de Douzens (G)

Manessier (Ma)

Gerbert (GE)

; Parzival of Wolfram von Eschenbach (Par); Wiû Crone, Heinrich von dem Tûrlin (H); Didot-Perceval (D); Mabinogi of Peredur ab Evrawc (Mab) ; The Thornton MS . Sir Perceval (T); Queste del Saint Graal (Q); Grand St. Graal (GG); Joseph of Arimathea, Robert de Borron (B).

The Lamentation of the Mother

Chrestien. When Perceval leaves his mother, she falls prostrate at the head of the bridge as if she were dead.

Gerbert chronicles that Perceval indirectly caused the death of his mother.

Mabinogi of Peredur ab Eivrawc. The mother of Peredur swoons at the thought of his leaving her.

Virginity and Purity of the Knight

The knight, who would achieve the quest of the Grail must, first of all, observe strict chastity.

Chrestien. It is to be noted in Chrestien's version that the hero shares the couch of Blanchfleur, his love, while on the quest (C6).

Manessier. In this version, Perceval is tempted by a maiden but saves himself by making the sign of the cross (Ma 16); his relation to Blanchfleur is the same as in Chrestien.

Gerbert. Perceval is told that his desertion of Blanchfleur is the cause of his failure to achieve the Grail. (Ge 8) After Perceval returns and marries the maiden, he leaves her a virgin; no direct reference is made here, however, to a relation between chastity and the winning of the Grail.

Wolfram von Eschenbach. In this version a sacred order of knighthood, vowed to chastity, guard the Grail.

Didot-Perceval. Perceval sends a maiden away from him, who fain would have stayed (D 3). The Hermit tells Perceval that he is to slay no knight nor lie with any woman. (D6)

Queste del Saint Graal. An old priest tells Arthur's knights that on the quest no knight is to have his lady with him, since the quest is no earthly one. Later Perceval is on the point of yielding to a damsel, when the sight of his sword hilt brings him to remembrance. References to the chastity of the hero abound in this version. Galahad, the ideal knight of chastity, is one of the Grail Seekers.

Grand St. Graal. Eleven of the sons of Joseph choose wedding, but the twelfth chooses virginity and the service of the Grail. (GG42)

The Supper

When the knight comes to the Grail castle, the Fisher King¹ has a supper prepared for him. The Grail procession passes^{2.} while they are at meat.

**

In connection with this point, the ^{uncertainty as to the chronological order} ~~priority~~ of ^{the} texts is disturbing (as it ^{is} does, more or less, in this whole study). It is to be noted that the later the version, the more emphasis is placed on the virginity and purity of the hero. If we should use only the evidence of Chrestien's version, without doubt the earliest of these texts, the point would not appear at all. We cannot, however, take Chrestien as the sole authority since the other texts may represent earlier accounts.

1. G, Ge.

2. Ma, Ge, D, Q.

The Procession

Chrestien. A squire enters bearing a sword on which is inscribed that it will never break except in one peril known only to the maker. The squire is followed by another, who bears a lance from which blood runs down, drop by drop, into the squire's hand. Two more squires each bear in a two branched candlestick. Then comes a damsel with a Grail which shines so brightly that it puts out the light of the candles. Another maiden comes bearing a silver plate.

Heinrich von dem Türlin. A youth bears in a sword, two maidens lights, two knights a spear, and two more maidens a "toblier" of gold and jewels. After them comes the fairest woman God ever created and with her a maiden weeping. The spear and "toblier" are placed on the table; in the latter are three drops of blood. The fair lady feeds the old man from a box of bread, which she carries.

Didot-Perceval. While Perceval and the Fisher King are eating, a squire bears in a lance from which flows a drop of blood.

A damsel bears in two silver plates and clothes; then comes a squire with the vessel in which the blood of Christ had been.

The Mabinogi of Peredur ab Eyrwac. Two youths enter the hall with a spear, from whose point three streams of blood flow. Two maids then appear with a salver in which a man's head swims in blood.

Queste del St. Graal. Four damsels carry in a man on a wooden bed. He wears a crown and appears to be suffering. Joseph appears, borne by angels; he kneels before the altar and opens the door of the ark. Four angels emerge, the first with burning lights, the next with a cloth of red samite and the

and the fourth with a lance, which drips blood in a box.

Grand St. Graal . The most elaborate procession occurs in the Grand St. Graal. The healing, the question and the questing knight do not appear. After Joseph had received the Grail, he made a wooden ark in which to keep it. Later Josephes, son of Joseph, sees wonderful things in the ark. Joseph, wondering at his son's state, kneels before the ark and sees there an altar covered with white cloths, under which is a red samite one, covering three nails, a lance head all bloody, and the dish he had brought. Seven angels issue from the ark with water and watering pot, gold basins and towels, gold censers and candles. An eighth carries the holy dish; a ninth, a head so rich and beautiful as never mortal eye saw; a tenth, a sword. Then three angels with tapers lead in Jesus. Joseph celebrates the sacrament.

*

The Object- Sacred, Foodgiving, Healing

Chrestien. All we are told about the Grail here is that it shines so brightly that it puts out the light of the candles.

Gautier. A rich Graal serves out bread and wine to the knight on the bier.

Manessier. The Grail heals Perceval and "Hector" of their wounds.

Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival. Here the Grail is a stone , which furnishes all manner of food and drink. Its power is sustained by a dove, which every Good Friday lays a Host upon it.

Queste del Saint Graal. As Arthur's knights are sitting around the table, a clap of thunder is heard and the Grail enters, covered with a cloth of white samite. It passes around the table and, as it passes, each finds food at his place. While on the quest, Galahad and Perceval come to a chapel. They find in the chapel an altar on which seven candles are burning. A sick knight is drawn in on a bier. The knight begs solace from the holy vessel for his pain. The Grail approaches and restores him. When Lancelot comes to the chapel, a voice tells him to be gone, since he pollutes the spot where the Grail is. Perceval is told how Joseph, by means of the Grail, fed a multitude with twelve loaves of bread. Lancelot looks on the Grail and, as a result, is struck dumb, "foodless and drinkless fourteen days". Evelac is struck blind by a sight of the Grail. At a dinner with King Pelleas, the Grail fills the tables with food.

Grand St. Graal. The incident of the multiplication of the twelve ^a loaves, told in the Queste del Saint Graal text, is referred to here also. Mordains presses too near to see the Grail and consequently loses his sight and power of body. Peter, a kinsman of Joseph, bears the Grail through the ranks of an encamped troop and all are fed with the best food except the sinners. A similar miracle is performed at Josue's wedding.

Robert de Borron. Christ appears to Joseph in a great light and gives him the holy vessel.

* We can only surmise concerning the original meaning of the word grail, graal. The word may be derived from Ecc. Lat.

The Question and its Results

The knight arrives at the Grail castle, where he asks ¹,
 instructed before ², concerning the lance and the Grail (or ³ does
 not ask ⁵). If the knight puts the question, the Fisher King ⁸
 or Maimed King ⁶ is healed ⁷ or his suffering is relieved by death, ⁹
 and the country, which was waste, blossoms again. In case the ¹⁰
 knight does not ask the question, the King must continue to suffer ¹¹
 or the castle and its occupants disappear.

gradale, graduale, meaning a service book. It probably comes from
 O.F. graal, grael, greel, greil < Med. Lat. gradalis, a cup or plate.
 Grail is also referred to a popular Latin type cratalis, fr. cratus
 altered from Lat. crater, cup. Oxford dictionary v. Grail.
Crater (Lat. cup) cratalis, gradalis, graal, grail seems a logical
 etymology to W.A. Nitze, Concerning the Word Graal, Greal.
 Mod.Phil. March, 1916.

- | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|------------|
| 1. G. Ma.Par. H. | 2. H. | 3. C. Par. Mab. Qu. | 4. C. Par. |
| 6. T. Qu. | 7. C. Ge. Par. H. D. T. | 8. H. D. | |
| 9. G. Ge. El. | 11. C. Ge. Par. H. D. | | |

10.

THE ESSENTIAL POINTS OF SIMILARITY BETWEEN INITIATION
CEREMONIES

Just as there are certain parts of the Grail story, which are common to all versions, so are there certain common elements in most initiation ceremonies. From a study of the ceremonies of the primitive tribes of Australia, Africa, and the American Indians, the following common elements have been noted:¹

1. Corporal² mutilation.
2. Painting the body with clay; tattooing.
3. Simulated death of the initiate.
4. Period of retirement of the initiate into the bush or jungle.
5. Use of certain sacred objects, whose nature is revealed to the novice during the initiation.

Each of these points will be examined in detail with references.

1. For a list of the names of the secret societies or tribes whose initiation ceremonies were studied see below p.32.

Corporal Mutilation

Australia. Circumcision and subincision are the most striking characteristics of Central Australian initiation ceremonies.¹

Knocking out the teeth accompanies initiation into the tribal societies of Southeastern Australia.² Other forms of mutilation are also used in Australia.³

Africa. Flogging and circumcision⁴ are the more common forms of corporal mutilation accompanying African rites of initiation.⁵

1. Spencer and Gillen, Native Tribes of Central Australia, ch. vii; pp 218 ; 231 et sq.; 251; 263.

Spencer and Gillen, Northern Tribes of Central Australia, ch. xi, 328.

2. A.H. Howitt, Joul. Anthropol. Inst., xiii, 432-457; 440 et sq.

Mackenzie, do. , vii, 252.

P. Cameron, do. xiv, 357.

A.H. Howitt, Native Tribes of Southeast Australia. 541 et sq.

3. Mackenzie, op cit.

A.H. Howitt, Joul. Anthropol. Institute. xx, 83.

4. T.C. Hodson, The Naga Tribes of Manipur, p. 199.

R.H. Nassau, Fetichism in Western Africa, p. 323.

5. C.A. Wheelwright, Journal Anthropological Institute, xviv, 268.

T.J. Allbridge, A Transformed Colony of Sierra Leone, ch. xxiv.

A.C. Hollis, The Nadi.

H.H. Johnston, On the Races of the Congo.

A.J. Tremearne, The Tailed Head Hunters of Nigeria, p. 204

The American Indians. Flogging was the common form of physical test inflicted by the Indians on the initiates into their secret societies.¹

Painting the Body of the Novice; Tattooing

Australia. Among the Southeastern tribes, charcoal dust is used² to decorate the novice and also those in charge of the ceremonies. Among the Northern tribes, red and yellow ochre and white pipe clay³ are the common paints.

Africa. Tattooing is prevalent in Africa in ceremonies of initiation⁴; painting with various compounds, especially white pipe clay⁵ is also customary.

1. C.R.Markham, Rites and Laws of the Incas, pp.35.
Fifteenth Rep. Bur. Ethn. p. 251.
Do. xxiii, 102.
Rep. Field Columbian Museum, iii,98.
2. A.C.Howitt, op. cit.,550.
Fison and Howitt, Kamilaroi and Kurnai, p. 195.
3. Spencer and Gillen, Nor. Tr. p.334.
Do. Nat. Tr. ch. vii; 214 et sq.
G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, viii, 426. Ibid. 429.
4. T.C. Hodson, op.cit.,p. 31.
Mary H. Kingsley, Travels in western Africa, p. 531.
5. F. J. Weeks, Folk Lore, xx, 189.
G.Frazer, op. cit.,xi, 248.
R.H.Nassau, op.cit.,324.
T.J. Alldridge, op. cit.,225.

The American Indians. Painting the initiate is a common practice among the American Indians.¹ White pipe clay is sometimes used² as in Australia.

Simulated Death of the Initiate

Australia*: In certain Australian rites, a grave is dug and a man, simulating death, is placed therein. The grave is then loosely filled and smoothed to represent untouched earth. At the proper time in the ceremony the "dead man" comes to life.³

H.H. Johnston, op. cit., xiii, 472.

H. Ward, Journal Anthropol. Inst. xxiv, 288-9.

Mary H. Kingsley, op. cit.

1. G. Frazer, Totemism and Exogamy, iii, 482; do., 505.

Fewkes and Stephens, Amer. Folk Lore, v, 208.

Boas, Rep. Com. N.W. Tribes of Canada, vi, 47 et sq.

Chalmers, Journal Anthropol. Inst., xxxiii, 119.

Dorsey, Rep. Bur. Ethn., iii, 353.

Amer. Folk Lore, v, 135; 189.

2. F. Boas, The Tribes of the North Pacific Coast.

Hains, The American Indian, 535.

3. A.W. Howitt, Journal Anthropol. Inst., xiii, 440 et sq.

Do. Nat. Tr. 554 et sq.

Spencer and Gillen, Nor. Tr., 342; 366; 501; 498; 523.

* Among the Australian tribes the initiate does not go through the ceremony of simulated death, but another member of the tribe performs that rite in his presence.

Africa. The initiate into the African society of Ndembo falls "dead" in the street and is carried off to the jungle as a corpse¹. Such practices are common to many African societies.²

The American Indians. The initiate is told that the spirit residing in the medicine man will enter his body and strike him dead. The medicine man then throws at him a small shell or bean, which appears to enter his body. When the initiate feels this, he immediately falls "dead". When he is resuscitated, the shell drops from his mouth.³

1. L. Frobenius, *The Childhood of Man*, p. 200.

Sir H. Johnston, *op.cit.*, 669.

Journal Anthropol. Inst. xxv, 189.

J.H. Weeks, *Folk Lore*, xx, 189.

G. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, xi, 259.

2. Winterbottom, *Native Tribes in the Neighborhood of Sierra Leone*, i, 139.

Dale, *Journal Anthropol. Inst.* ,xxv, 189.

Spencer and Gillen, *Nat. Tr.* p. 637.

T.J. Alldridge, *op. cit.*, ch. xxiv.

Mary H. Kingsley, *op., cit.*

G. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, xi, 263.

3. G. Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, iii, 432 et sq.

H.R. Schoolcraft, *Indian Tribes of the United States*, iii, 286.

Dorsey, *Rep. Bur. Ethn.*, xi, 429.

W.J. Hoffman, *do.*, vii, 143-300.

Boas, *op. cit.* ,vi, 47 et sq. *do.* x, 57 et sq.

Period of Retirement into Bush or Jungle

Australia. Retirement of the initiate into the bush follows every important division of the initiation ceremonies.¹

Africa. Retirement into the jungle accompanies initiation into secret societies of Africa.²

The American Indians. Among certain Indian tribes the initiate must spend a period of time in the forests away from his people.³

Rep. Bur. Ethn., xiv, 100.

Journal American Folk Lore, xix, 332.

G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, xi, 240 et sq.

(V. Frazer, The Golden Bough, ³ Part VII, ~~xi~~, ch. xi, for a complete account of the ritual of ^{simulated} death and resurrection of all tribes.)

1. Spencer and Gillen, Nor. Tr., 340 et sq.

Fison and Howitt, op. cit., 197.

Spencer and Gillen, Nat. Tr., ch. viii.

2. Sir I. Johnson, George Grenfell and the Congo, p. 667.

T J Alldridge, op. cit., ch. xxiv.

R.H. Nassau, op. cit., p. 249 et sq.

A.C. Hollis, op. cit.

Mary H. Kingsley, op. cit., p. 531.

P. Cameron, Journal Anthropol. Inst., xix, 357 ff.

3. Boas, Rep. Com. N.W. Tribes of Canada, vi, 63 et sq.

H.R. Schoolcraft, op. cit., iii, 286 et sq.

G. Frazer, Totemism and Exogamy, iii, 503; do. 504.

Sacred Objects

Australia. The Bull R^drer (churinga) is the most widely¹ used sacred object in initiation ceremonies of Australia. The Waniga and Nurtunja (decorated spears) are also used in rites² of initiation. They are less sacred than the Bull R^drer.

Africa. The Bull R^drer is used in African ceremonies of³ initiation.

1. Spencer and Gillen, Nat. Tr., 303; do., 130 et sq. 332.

A.C. Howitt, Journal Anthropol. Inst., xiv, 314.

Holmes, do., xxxii, 425.

Haddon, do., xix, 432

Fison and Howitt, op. cit., p. 197, 198.

Spencer and Gillen, Nat. Tr., 342; 347; 366; 373.

A.C. Howitt, Nat. Tr., 309-10; 659; 669; 672; 676.

P. Cameron, op. cit., 357.

2. Spencer and Gillen, op. cit.

A.C. Howitt, op. cit.

3. Sir H. Johnston, op. cit., i, 665.

Hilton-Simpson, Land and Peoples of the Kasai, 283.

Journal Anthropol. Inst., xxxiii, 119.

A.C. Hollis, op. cit.

H.H. Johnston, op. cit., xiii, 4722

J. Holmes, Journal Anthropol. Inst., xxxii, 418.

Mrs. R.B. Batty, do., xviv, 160-1.

Chalmers, Pioneering in New Guinea, p. 85 et sq.

The American Indians. The Indians used many objects in connection with ceremonies of initiation. The result of this multiplicity of objects was that no one is accorded such reverence as the tribes of Australia give to the Bull Rōrer. The most common sacred objects among the Indians are the white shell of the medicine societies, the Bull Rōrer, and the sacred pipes.¹

1. Franz Keller, The Amazon and Maderia Rivers, 124.

Rep. Bur. Ethn., v, 435-7.

Do. xxiii, 115. Do. ix, 476.

Boas, op. cit., vi, 71 et sq.

See also references to Simulated Death above p.14.

ANALOGIES BETWEEN CEREMONIES OF THE GRAIL AND
PRIMITIVE INITIATION

Among the Grail and primitive initiation rites there seems to be but one essential point in common. Both make extensive use of sacred objects. The other characteristics of ceremonies of initiation,- the simulated death, burial and resurrection of the initiate, corporal mutilation, period of retirement into the wilds, painting or tattooing of the initiate,- have no parallels in Grail ceremony. There are, on the other hand, resemblances, in primitive initiation rites, to three of the remaining characteristics of Grail stories,- the lamentation of the mother, virginity and purity of the knight, and the supper. A further examination of the common point - the use of sacred objects- is desirable.

The Zuñi ceremony of initiation into priesthood is very elaborate. It consists principally in dancing and "healing" by the extraction of stones from the bodies of those ill.¹ The initiate must be present but he has no part in the ceremonies. These stones are held sacred by the tribe; they possess healing power, which accounts for their use in the "death" ceremonies. No doubt these stones are akin to the sacred medicine stones,² used during the rites of initiation into the medicine society, Medawin. In this ceremony, the stones are placed in the mouths of the novices. When they are "resurrected," the stones are removed. In the colony of Para Katu certain medicine stones are

1. Bur. Ethn. Rep., xxiii, 490, 522 , 532, 550, 558.

2. Constance Dubois, American Anthropologist, n.s. vii, 620.

~~are~~ supposed to have a supernatural power of healing. Around these¹ stones as a center an elaborate healing ceremony has grown up. Near the sacred Hakea tree, in the Hakea flower totem of Australia, there is a pit containing an oval stone. Before the ceremony in connection with this sacred stone, the pit is carefully cleansed. Then the men sit around the stone for a long time, singing chants that the totem may flourish. Finally the leader asks one of the young men to open a vein in his arm and allow the blood to sprinkle on the stone until it is completely covered. The² spot is held sacred and forbidden to women and children. Among the Mission Indians, the stone mortar in which the Toloacha roots are ground for use in the initiation rites, is held very sacred. The small bowls, from which the novice receives the juice of the plant are also sacred.³ The sacred object, used in connection with the initiation ceremonies of the men of Toaripi, is the great mask of Semese. After various initial trials, the youth⁴ is allowed to look on this mask. Among the sacred musical instruments are the drums of East Africa, the juripari⁵ instruments of Rio Negro, and the sacred flutes of the Kai.⁶

1. Spencer and Gillen, Nat. Tr., 184; do., 462.

2. T.J. Allridge, A Transformed Colony, 232.

3. Constance Dubois, American Anthropologist, n.s. vii, 620.

4. Chalmers, Pioneering in New Guinea.

5. H. Webster, Primitive Secret Societies, 64.

6. G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, xi, 241.

The most generally used of all sacred objects is the Bull R^arer. It is found, from Australia to Southern California, from Africa to China. The typical Bull R^arer consists of an oval piece of wood or stone. A hole is punched in one end in which a string is tied. The edges of the instrument are often serrated. By means of the string, the Bull R^arer is whirled rapidly in the air, producing a whirring sound of lesser or greater intensity depending upon the speed at which it is whirled. The sound produced by the Bull R^arer is supposed, by the women and children, to be the voice of the great god of the tribe. The secret of the Bull R^arer is revealed to the novice during the course of the initiation. Bull R^arrers are held sacred without reference to the sound they produce. This is exemplified by the fact that they are very often found without strings and are revered just the same. The Bull R^arer has all sorts of marvelous qualities. It restores¹ the sick,² heals wounds,³ influences the growth of the beard,⁴ protects its possessor against all enemies. The Bull R^arer is also significant to the tribe as a whole. The loss of one or the violation of the sacredness of one would cause general disaster. Descriptions of the removal of these objects from place remind one of accounts of the passing of the Ark of the Covenant.

1. Spencer and Gillen, Nat. Tr., 545 et sq.

2. Ibid, 248.

3. Ibid, 135.

4. Ibid, 545.

The Nurtunja and the Waninga are other sacred objects used in Australian ceremonies of initiation. The Nurtunja is made by fastening bunches of grass around a lance with hair or strips of opossum skin. White birds' down is then stuck over this by means of a paste ^{of which} the principal ingredient ¹ is human blood. The top is surmounted by large feathers. The Waninga is a similar object. It differs from the Nurtunja in that it has cross pieces at either end of the spear. Between these pieces cords of hair or fur are strung and the whole ^{is then} ² thickly covered with birds' down. These objects are not so sacred as the Bull Rorer (churinga) since they are regarded as mere symbols of the lances of the ancestors. The Bull Rorer ³ is supposed to be permeated with the ancestor himself. The Nurtunja and the Waninga are used in the initiation ceremony as visual symbols ⁴ of the totem to which the novice is to be absorbed.

The Lamentation of the Mother

In the Indian ceremony of Huseanawer, the mother prepared the funeral pyre for the simulated sacrifice of her son and wept for him as if he were really dead. During the initiation rites of the Virlouan Aborigines, the mothers and other relatives ^{was}

1. Spence and Gillen, Nat. Tr., 298; 360.

2. Ibid, 231; 306.

3. Ibid, 346.

4. Durkheim, Elementary Forms of Religious Life, pp. 125.

Cf. Totem poles of the Indians, esp. Omahas. v. Dorsey, Rep. Bur. Ethn., xi, 413.

surround the group of men, crying and lamenting and lacerating¹ their bodies with sharp stones and flints. The women of certain tribes of Queensland ~~cry~~^{weep} and assume the conventional dress of mourning, when they see their sons decorated for initiation. The boys' uncles² take part in the lamentation also. Such is also the custom among the women of the Andaman Islands. The youth of the tribe of Kurnai (Australia) remain in the bush for some months after initiation, "frightened at the sorrow of their mothers." During the simulated death rites of initiation into the Cannibal Society of the Niskas, the women mourn and wail.³ Such a custom is found also among the Haidus.⁴ The women of the tribes of Kai lament as their sons go to initiation.⁵

A few accounts tell of the relation of the mother to the novice during initiation. The following description of an initiation rite, practiced by the Indians of Wyoming, suggests Perceval's instruction by his mother before he rode forth. From the age of five, the little sons were obliged to ascend a hill at stated times to pray aloud to Waheonda. The youth is informed by his mother when the time comes. He then rubs himself with white clay and, at sunrise, sets off for the top of a hill, instructed by his mother what to say to the Master of Life.⁶ The mother has a definite place

1. American Anthropologist, xi, 339 et sq.

2. Roth, Ethnological Studies, 172.

3. Fison and Howitt, op. cit., 197.

3a. Boas, op. cit., 57 et sq.

4. J.R. Swanton, Contributions to the Ethnology of the Haidas, pp. 156; 160; 181.

5. Frazer, op. cit., xi, 240.

6. Haines, The American Indian.

in the initiation rites of Australia. At the initial ceremony, she must present the youth with a fire stick. The boy guards this carefully, for, should it go out, the mother will be killed.¹

While the boys are in the bush, the mothers wear the tail-tip of some small animal " to keep their sons watchful."²

Virginity and Purity of the Knight

Virginity was one of the conditions of initiation into the puberty societies of the natives of the Papuan Gulf.³ The initiates into the "knight" societies of the Incas had to undergo purification before admission.⁴ Among the Narrinyeri, boys, during initiation are called Narumbe, i.e. sacred from the touch of women. Everything that they possess or obtain becomes Narumbe also.⁵ Howitt, speaking of this general region, but not of this tribe, says that the initiated youth, during the time that he was Narumbe had complete license as to the younger women and could even approach those of his own class and totem.⁶ Initiates into the Cannibal Society of the Kwakiutl may not have intercourse with women,^{6a} may not work or gamble. During the initiation rites in New South Wales, the novices are not allowed to come into the presence of women.⁷

The initiates into the secret societies of the tribes

1. Spencer and Gillen, Nor.Tr., 338.

2. Ibid, 334.

3. Holmes, Journal Anthropol. Inst., xxxii, 421.

4. Markham, (Ed.), Rites and Laws of the Incas, 24.

5. Thomas, Social Origins, p. 526.

6. A.C. Howitt, Nat. Tr., p. 261.

6a. Boas, op. cit., p. 526.

7. Matthew, Journal Anthropol. Inst., ix, 344.

of Kai are not permitted intercourse with women.¹ Among the tribes of Southeastern Australia, the youth must keep his virginity for three years after initiation.²

In contrast to the above accounts we have the following:

Extreme license takes place in the kraal, after the first part of the initiation among the Masai tribes of Africa.³ Among the Boulia tribes of Queensland, the novice is allowed to marry, after undergoing the first part of the ceremony of initiation.⁴ Initiation into many of the African secret societies are frankly given over to extremes of licentiousness.⁵ Many of the Indian societies, admitting women tended to concupiscence.⁶ Some of the steps of initiation into Siouan secret societies were characterized by sexual license.⁷ Similar practices were found among the Crows.⁸

The Supper

Feasts accompany many of the initiation ceremonies of primitive tribes.⁸

1. G.Frazer, The Golden Bough, vi, 240 et sq.
2. A.C.Howitt, Nat. Tr., 570 et sq.
3. Thompson, Through Masai Land.
4. Roth, Ethnological Studies, p. 169.
5. J.g. Ndembo, Nuncetyi, Lubuku, Ikimba.
6. Dorsey, Rep. Bur. Ethn., iii, 742.
7. G.Frazer, Totemism and Exogamy, iii, 472., quoting Maximilian Prinz zu Wied, Reise in das Innere Nord-America, ii, 158 et sq.
8. Ibid, 474.

The Procession

On the day on which the prospective "knights" are to be given
 part in the ceremonies of initiation, all the youths, all
 proceed to the public square, where they are assembled.

The novices are shorn and then dressed in new garments.
 Girls in elaborate costumes carry small vases of chicha through the
 crowd. Four days after this part of the ceremony, the maidens
 meet the youths as they return from the desert, where they ^{have} remained¹
 during this time, and give them drink from the vases of chicha.

In another ceremony of the Incas a procession occurs. All the
 people assemble according to their tribes and lineages, as
 richly dressed as their means will allow. The Ynca (chief priest)
 carrying a great vase of gold containing chicha, leads the procession.
 Priests follow in order, then the families with the embalmed bodies
 of their ancestors.² Four maidens, daughters of chiefs, are
 elected to the Warriors' Society of the Algonquins. They take
 part in the initiation ceremonies of the society. They ^{must}₃
 remain virgins as long as they belong to the society.

1. Markham, op. cit., 35.

2. Ibid., 26 et seq.

3. G.A. Dorsey, The Cheyenne, p. 16ff; 53.

CONCLUSION

As it has been shown, there is no coincidence between the fundamental parts of Grail ceremony and the fundamental parts of ceremonies of initiation except at one point, the use of sacred objects. The sacred stone mortar is the most striking instance of a single vessel as a sacred object among ^{the} primitive peoples studied. This shows how close the connection is between a stone and a cup, since the vessel of the Mission Indians is simply a hollowed out stone.¹ The Grail has healing and food giving power.² These qualities are common to the sacred objects of initiation ceremonies. That the food supply may be increased by its use, either directly or indirectly by causing rain, is the Bull Roarer's excuse for being.³ The medicine stones, sacred masks and Bull Roarer are examples of the healing power of the sacred object.⁴ Clearly then, inasmuch as it deals with ceremonies of sacred objects, the Grail Stories might easily have their foundations in primitive rites of initiation.

The lamentation of the mother and female relatives of the novice frequently accompanies primitive initiation rites. The sorrowing of Perceval's mother may have some such foundation as this, but since there is no suggestion of the simulated death ceremony in which ^{connection} the mother's lamentation always appears, the point cannot be stressed.

1. Recall that the Grail in Wolfram is a stone. v. above p.7.
2. V. above p.7-9.
3. Andrew Lang, Custom and Myth. A general discussion of the qualities of the Bull Roarer.
4. V. above pp.7-9.

Virgin¹ity appears as a condition for initiation into many secret societies. It is to be noted that in those initiations accompanied by licentiousness, the licentious practices take place after the first part of the initiation. However, virginity is not stressed in any account as it is in the Grail stories. That the primitive man insisted upon virginity of the novice just before initiation is explained by the fact that the novice must have full command of his strength for the trials to follow. This characteristic of primitive initiation may have been seized upon by Christian narrators of the Grail Story and emphasized to the degree which we get it in the later versions.

No rite among the initiation ceremonies was found similar to the Grail procession. To be sure, there are processions, but they are entirely different in character from that of the Grail. The most common form of procession takes place when the novices are led to the wilds. The men, adorned with paints and feathers, file out singly, chanting over and over the song appropriate to the occasion. The novices march between them.² The sacred objects are never revealed to the initiates by a procession of attendants as in the Grail ceremony. There is a resemblance in that girls are often found in the role of priestesses as in the Grail rites. The Algonquin society of Warriors, which elects four "high born"³ maidens who must remain virgins, is an interesting example.

1. V. above p. 23.

2. The Knight in the Grail Stories has no part in the procession.

3. V. above p.25.

In the Grail stories the hero is entertained at supper by the Fisher King. Feasts abound in connection with primitive initiation ceremonies. Here, however, it is the novice or his parents who give the feast and those in charge of the initiation who are the recipients. The novice is very often not allowed to partake of the feast. No significance can be attached to this point.

There is nothing in ceremonies of initiation, which corresponds to the question required of the Grail Seeker. The role of the novice in these ceremonies is one of passive endurance. He is often instructed not to speak during the ceremony,- a fact which calls to mind the admonition of Gongsamans to Perceval concerning too much talking.

The difficulty with interpreting the incapacity of the Fisher King as part of the simulated death ceremony of initiation is that he can not be the initiate. If Perceval were the one to be restored, the similarity to rites of initiation would be striking. In all accounts except two, the initiate is the one who undergoes "death and rebirth". During initiation into certain secret societies of the Fijian Islands, the novices are sent to the temples of initiation for five days in succession bearing gifts. On the fifth day, they find the floor strewn with what appears to be horribly disfigured corpses. They are compelled to crawl over these "corpses" to deposit their offerings before the chief priest. When all accomplish this, the "corpses" arise with a shout. They are men bedabbled with the blood and entrails of pigs.

During certain of the initiation rites of Australia, a grave is prepared and an old man placed therein. Twigs are loosely heaped over him and dirt and leaves placed on top to represent untouched earth. At a proper time in the ceremony, he comes forth "alive from the grave¹ to the mystification of the novices.

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LIST OF SOCIETIES EXAMINED

Australia. All initiations among tribes of Australia, examined were puberty rites. Secret societies do not exist as in Africa. Ceremonies of the tribes of Central, North Central and Southeastern Australia were studied.

Africa. Bundu, Ndenbo, Leopard, Purrah, Ukuku, Egbo, Inda, Yasi, Nunetyi, Purra Pora, Dukduk, Sndemgo, Nwetyi, Bweti, Ukukwe, Nkimba, Nda, Malanda, Ngi, Maramba, Elung, Ekongolo, Mungi, Mukuku, Nwemba, Ikum, Idiong, Ogboni, Afa, Kfong, Katahwiri, Zangbeto, Sembe, Oro, Egunguri, Simo, Penda-Penda, Amporo, Don, Naferi, "Mumbo Jumbo", Kongerong.

American Indians.

Sioux. Ghost, Goat, Buffalo, Wolves, Grizzly Bears, Horses, Thunder, Wacicka, Medicine, Mad Dogs, Crows, Soldiers, Black -tailed Stags, Stone, Great Swords, Ravens, Little Prairie Foxes, Little Dogs, Old Dogs, Bow-lances, Foes, Hot Water, Wild Geese, Skunks, Girls, Rocks, Open Water, Canoes Woods, Age, Bones, Mountains,

Algonquins. Mosquitoes, Dogs, Prairie Foxes, Ravens, Bulls with thin horns, Soldiers, Buffalo Bulls, The Societies of All Comrades include Little Birds, Pigeons, Mosquitoes, Braves, Crazy Dogs, Raven Bearers, Dogs, Tails, Horns, Kit-foxes, Ctchers of Soldiers Bulls, The Fox Men., The Star Men., The Club Men , The Spear Men, The Crazy Men, The Dog Men, Nunahawu, The Water -pouring Men. (Cheyennes) Dog Men, Flint Men, Coyote Warriors, Red Skin Warriors, Bowstring Men, Crazy Dogs, The Wolf Society, Midewin, Mitawirt.

Arickarees. Bears, Mad Wolves, Foxes, Mad Dogs, Mad Bulls, Soldiers; (Maidus), Kumeh; (Nootkas) Tlokoala, Teyiywan, Quequanitel;

(Shuswup) Various Dancing Societies; (Bella Coolas) Elaxolela, Olx, Dati, Kwakiutl. Cannibal Spirit, Ghost, Grizzly Bear, Fool Spirit, Kuetuksa, Naanexsoku, Killer-whales, Rock cods, Sea Lions, Whales, Koskimos, Eaters, Kekixalaku, Hens, Cows, The Meemkoat Societies which include Hamatsas, Nutlmatl, Nave, Lelaalenox; The Salmon Societies, Kominoka,

Tsimshians. Simhalait, Mihla, Novhlem, Hop-pop.

Niskas. Meitla, Lotlem, Olola, Nanestat, Honanatl,

Haidas. Grizzly Bear, Wolf, Dog Eater, Fire Thrower, Club, Dress and Wrestling Spirits.

Tinnehs. The Honorific Totem Societies.

Arapahooes. The Sun Dances.

Zuñi. The Rain Ceremonies, Puberty Ceremonies.

Incas. The Knight Society.

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